

## **NH Dredge Management Task Force Meeting Minutes – July 15, 2009**

**The meeting was held on Wednesday, July 15, 2009 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM at the Department of Environmental Services/New Hampshire Coastal Program Office, 50 International Drive, Pease Tradeport, Portsmouth, NH.**

### **Introductions/Announcements**

Chairman Chris Williams asked members to introduce themselves. The list of attendees follows.

#### **Attending members in alphabetical order:**

Valerie Cappola, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)  
Tom Dobbins, Sprague Energy  
Chuck Gilboy, Staff for Congresswoman Shea-Porter  
Olga Guza-Pabst, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Richard Heidebrecht, ACOE  
Carol Henderson, NH Fish and Game Department (NHF&G)  
Richard Holt Jr., Portsmouth Pilots - Moran Towing Corp.  
Dean Peschel, City of Dover  
Frank Richardson, Department of Environmental Services (DES) Wetlands Bureau  
Michael Sills, DES Waste Management Division  
Michael Walsh, ACOE  
Chris Williams, Chairman, NH Coastal Program (NHCP)

#### **Guests:**

Shachak Peeri, UNH Center for Coastal & Ocean Mapping

#### **Staff:**

Mary Power, NHCP

Chairman Williams began the meeting by informing members that fellow Task Force member Dr. Fred Short of the UNH Jackson Estuarine Lab recently received the Coastal America Partnership Award, which is the only environmental award of its kind given by the President. Dr. Short received the Award for his eelgrass restoration work in Rhode Island.

### **Legislative Update**

Chairman asked for a legislative update from Chuck Gilboy of Congresswoman Shea-Porter's Office. Mr. Gilboy reported that in the House Energy & Water Appropriations Bill the Cocheco River Maintenance Dredge project was awarded \$1.2 million and the Hampton Harbor Maintenance project was awarded \$130K. He also stated that the Hampton Harbor Section 107 Feasibility Study was approved, however, there were no funds appropriated specifically for the project. Chairman Williams added that based on communications he's had with Senator Gregg's Office and with Senator Shaheen's

Office, the Senate's Energy and Water subcommittee has marked up their Water Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010. The bill includes \$500,000 for Simplex Shoal project. The Chairman stated that the project was also contained in the President's budget. He reminded members that the Simplex Shoal project was the state's #1 priority project for FY 2010 funding. The state had requested \$1 million for the project. He continued by stating that the Senate approved \$2 million for the Cocheco River Maintenance Dredge project, and that the Hampton Harbor Section 107 improvement project was referenced in the Senate's bill, however it will have to compete for funding nationally with other Section 107 projects. Chairman reminded members that the House and Senate bills would need to be reconciled to determine final funding amounts.

### **Project Updates:**

► *Piscataqua River Turning Basin Feasibility Study* – Dick Heidebrecht of the ACOE stated they are currently conducting fieldwork and have placed two tide gauges in the river near the Sprague Energy facility. They have also installed an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) in the existing turning basin. The data from the ADCP will be used to calibrate a program that will determine what effect, if any, the proposed widening of the turning basin will have on currents in the area. The ACOE has also recently taken more grab samples to provide additional details for the ACOE's Suitability Determination for disposal of the dredge materials from the project. The ACOE is also in the process of analyzing the economics of the project and preparing the Environmental Assessment. Heidebrecht stated that he anticipates completion of an internal draft Feasibility Report by the end of this year.

► *Cocheco River Maintenance Dredge* – Mike Walsh of the ACOE stated that they are waiting to see if additional funding for the project will be approved by Congress. The ACOE will not put a contract out to bid without the assurance of additional funding. Walsh stated that it is likely too late to put out a contract out this year. If fiscal year (FY) 2010 funds become available, work will likely not be able to resume until the beginning of the dredge window in November 2010. Dean Peschel of the City of Dover, expressed the City's disappointment and asked if the ACOE's contract could be structured so that the money that is currently available for the project (\$1.8 million) could be used to perform some of the remaining dredging work during the upcoming dredge window (Nov. 15, 2009 – March 15, 2010), and when/if the FY2010 funds are approved these additional funds could be used to complete the project during the same dredge window. Walsh stated that the ACOE doesn't consider this a practicable option because if the FY 2010 funds don't become available, the mobilization and demobilization costs would be extremely expensive when compared to the amount of work that could be completed with the monies currently available. He stressed that the ACOE is not comfortable trying to negotiate a contract without all monies in hand. Discussion about the City's dredge disposal site followed. Peschel stated that the City is looking for dredge material from projects other than the Cocheco River project. He stated that he anticipates the City will decide to keep the disposal facility open for another year in anticipation of completion of the Cocheco River project.

► *Hampton Section 107 Feasibility Study Report* - Dick Heidebrecht of the ACOE stated that they continue to work on the DRAFT feasibility study report. He stated that they recently re-performed the economic analysis and updated costs to reflect the increases in fuel and other items. He also briefly provided an overview of the project for attendees. He then stated that the ACOE will be scheduling a planning meeting in the near future with the Pease Development Authority – Division of Ports and Harbors and the NHCP to discuss planning not only for the Section 107 project, but for the dredging associated with maintenance of the entrance channel and recreational anchorages. Chairman asked if the money that was previously allocated for plans and specifications is still available and, if so, whether the ACOE could proceed with plans and specifications. Heidebrecht stated that while the money is available, the New England District cannot proceed with the plans and specifications until they get approval for the project from ACOE headquarters.

Heidebrecht then informed members of a survey of the west wall of Seabrook 227 project bulkhead recently conducted by the ACOE. He stated that some material has eroded from between the two walls of the bulkhead. The ACOE is currently trying to determine how much material eroded. He stated that depending on the amount of material, the ACOE may elect to use material dredged from the harbor to refill the bulkhead to restore it to its original condition. Frank Richardson of the DES Wetlands Bureau stated that he has received reports of intensive shoaling in the Blackwater River and asked if the eroded material may be part of that problem. Heidebrecht stated that the material that eroded from between the two walls of the bulkhead appears to have moved into Seabrook Harbor. Discussion followed.

► *Sagamore Creek Maintenance Dredge* - Mike Walsh of the ACOE reported that a draft of the public notice for the project will be complete by the middle of August. Frank Richardson of the DES Wetlands Bureau asked where the dredged material generated by the project will be placed. Walsh stated that it is currently proposed to be placed in the near-shore waters off Wallis Sands State Park. Chairman Williams asked that the ACOE coordinate project disposal efforts with the City of Portsmouth and the Town of Rye, as well as with NH Department Resources and Economic Development, Division of Parks and Recreation officials. Olga Guza of EPA asked if the dredge material could be placed directly on the beach at Wallis Sands State Park. Walsh stated that the distance from the dredge site to the beach is too long to pump the dredge material via pipe onto the beach.

► *Piscataqua River “Simplex Shoal” Maintenance Dredge* - Valerie Cappola of the ACOE stated they are working on the environmental assessment for the project and trying to complete a draft public notice. She stated that although the ACOE is currently backlogged with projects that have received funding to begin work in November, 2009, the Simplex Shoal project remains high on the ACOE’s priority list.

## **Other Business**

► *Development of a NH-specific matrix of fish & shellfish species of concern* - Chairman Williams said the New England Regional Dredging Team (a.k.a. Sudbury Group) have been reviewing each state's dredge window/time of year restriction to develop a regional approach to the issue. On May 7<sup>th</sup> a subcommittee of this Task Force met at the NH Fish and Game Department (NHF&G) Office in Durham to discuss NH's dredge window. He referred to a DRAFT technical report developed by the State of Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries that includes a matrix containing information about fish and shellfish species. The subcommittee decided to create a similar matrix that would identify the fish and shellfish species of concern in NH and information specific to those species (i.e., life stage info.). The Chairman hopes the matrix will be used to help inform the ACOE and other applicants of the reasoning behind the timing of NH's dredge window. The Chairman met with NHF&G staff in June to begin developing the matrix. The process is ongoing. The Chairman indicated that he hopes to provide Task Force members with a DRAFT of the matrix to review at the next meeting.

The Chairman then stated that at the most recent Sudbury Group meeting in June the topic of planning for emergency situations and natural disasters was discussed. Members of the ACOE, Coast Guard, and EPA discussed procedures that each agency currently has in place. Topics such as emergency dredging for public safety and navigation were also discussed. The Sudbury Group will be assisting with efforts to develop a regional approach to emergency preparedness. In the future, this Task Force will be asked to provide information such as state and local agency contacts, and permitting/regulatory guidance to the Sudbury Group.

► *Schedule next DMTF meeting* - The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, **October 21, 2009, at 1:30 PM** at the DES/NHCP Office in Portsmouth.

Adjourned 3:00 P.M